



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
June 30, 2013

**MEDIA CONTACTS**  
Jared Touchin | 928.221.9253  
Krista Thompson | 928.637.5603  
Jolene Holgate | 928.871.7160  
nnlb.communications@gmail.com

## **22<sup>nd</sup> Navajo Nation Council approves two legislations that will impact the newly opened Twin Arrows Navajo Casino Resort**

**WINDOW ROCK** – During a special session held on Friday, the Navajo Nation Council approved Legislation No. 0108-13, exempting the Navajo Nation Oil and Gas Company from being subject to Navajo Nation fuel excise taxes to enable the entity to finance infrastructure development near the Twin Arrows Navajo Casino Resort - specifically a gas station and a convenience store.

The NNOGC will be exempt from fuel excise taxes until either the estimated \$2.5 million infrastructure costs are reimbursed to NNOGC or after a seven-year period from when the convenience store begins operation, whichever occurs first.

The Navajo Nation fuel excise tax, which was established in 1999, imposes an 18-cent per gallon tax on gasoline distributors or retailers on the Navajo Nation.

The legislation was sponsored by Council Delegate Russell Begaye (Shiprock) and Council Delegate Leonard Tsosie (Baca/Prewitt, Casamero Lake, Counselor, Littlewater, Ojo Encino, Pueblo Pintado, Torreon, Whitehorse Lake).

In addition, the Navajo Nation Council approved Legislation No. 0165-13, amending Title 17 of the Navajo Nation Code to allow the sale of alcohol on casino floors owned by the Navajo Nation Gaming Enterprise.

Legislation sponsor Council Delegate Mel Begay (Coyote Canyon, Mexican Springs, Naschitti, Tohatchi, Bahastl'a'a'), asked for the Council's support of the bill as a means to continue the growth and success of the NNGE.

"Council previously approved alcohol sales in a limited capacity, and I ask you to support this legislation to allow the enterprise to be competitive and flourish," said Delegate Begay.

The majority of Council's discussion centered on a proposed amendment issued by Council Delegate Leonard Tsosie (Baca/Prewitt, Casamero Lake, Counselor, Littlewater, Ojo Encino, Pueblo Pintado, Torreon, Whitehorse Lake) that sought to allow the sale of alcohol on casino floors from 2 p.m. to the regulatory closing time only, and to prohibit alcohol sales in the casino's gift shop and as part of hotel room service.

The proposed amendment was met with support from several delegates including Council Delegate Danny Simpson (Becenti, Crownpoint, Huerfano, Lake Valley, Nageezi, Nahodishgish,

Tse'ii'ahi, Whiterock), who argued that the NNGE should abide by the existing law approved by the 21<sup>st</sup> Navajo Nation Council in 2008.

“What’s more important, the lives of our Navajo people, or dollars?” asked Delegate Simpson of his Council colleagues. “It seems like we’re always bowing down to the gaming industry.”

Council Delegate Jonathan Nez (Shonto, Navajo Mountain, Oljato, Ts’ah Bii Kin) expressed concern that the NNGE could possibly face lawsuits if incidents involving alcohol occur, and urged fellow Council members to allow Navajo people to decide alcohol issues in the form of referendums.

“We need to give the choice to the people and let them decide for themselves,” said Delegate Nez.

Council Delegate Joshua Lavar Butler (Tó Nanees Dizi) spoke in opposition, calling the proposed amendment a double standard in regard to the Antelope Point Resort and Marina, located near Lake Powell in Page, which is allowed to sell alcohol through specific provisions outlined in Title 17 of the Navajo Nation Code.

NNGE CEO Derrick Watchman assured Council members that the sale of alcohol is heavily regulated by the Arizona Gaming Compact and the Arizona Department of Liquor Licenses and Control, in addition to Navajo Nation laws.

According to Watchman, NNGE employees are required to receive periodic training that allows servers to limit alcohol consumption by customers on an hourly basis, and to ensure customer safety.

“If we violate the regulations I could be subject to criminal prosecution, so I take this issue very serious,” said Watchman.

After an hour of discussion, Council voted down the proposed amendment with a vote of 7-9.

Council then immediately voted 9-7 in support of Legislation No. 0165-13.

The legislation does not impact Navajo-owned casinos currently operating in the state of New Mexico, due to restrictions in the New Mexico Gaming Compact that prohibit the sale of alcohol on casino floors throughout the state.

###

For news on the latest legislative branch activities, please visit [www.navajonationcouncil.org](http://www.navajonationcouncil.org)